

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism Federal Assistance Project

*Proposed Construction of the Hillsdale Shooting Range,
Miami County, Paola, Kansas*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has prepared this document in accordance with the procedures for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as it applies to the Federal Aid in Fish and Wildlife Restoration Acts (64 Stat. 430; 16 U.S.C. Sec. 777 et. seq. and 50 State 916; 16 U.S.C. Sec. 669 et. seq.).

A final environmental assessment entitled “Hillsdale Shooting Range” was prepared in compliance with the NEPA to assist in agency decision-making in determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. The purpose of the proposed action is to develop and construct a public outdoor shooting facility to provide safe and responsible public recreation opportunities and to enhance hunter education efforts for the Miami County area.

Three alternatives were evaluated:

No Action - This “no action” alternative would allow the area to continue succession to a more natural state. Mowing would continue to prevent the encroachment of trees. Recreation would remain unspecified, with one multi-use trail. With no action, continuation of recreational shooting in informal locations would likely continue, raising safety issues from unintended targets to uncontrolled shooting and shooting related debris left at various locations. Lead would not be expected to be a concern because of lack of concentrations. The main effect would be a continuation of public dissatisfaction at not having a safe, public, outdoor location for the various types of recreational shooting.

Alternative 1 - Preferred Action - The Preferred Action is to develop a shooting range complex at Hillsdale State Park, on land leased from the Corps of Engineers, located immediately below the dam to the east of the outlet. The complex will consist of a 20 position 50/100 yard rifle range, a 24 position 25/50 yard handgun range, six position 200 yard rifle range, a combination skeet/trap shotgun field, a gate house, combination meeting room/storage building, and a CXT pit toilet.

Alternative 2 – This alternative would be below the dam, but approximately one and a half miles southwest of the spillway. Plans would change from Alternative 1 and be for a shotgun only range, with one trap house, one low and one combination high/low skeet house. This area has minimal variation in elevation which does not make it conducive to the development of a rifle or handgun range.

Construction of the Hillsdale Shooting Range (Preferred Action) will not result in any significant adverse effects to floodplains, wetlands, prime or unique farmland; Federally-listed species; or archaeological, cultural, or historical resources.

Consultation and Coordination

The availability of the draft Environmental Assessment was announced in a news release, distributed in eastern Kansas to all newspapers. A notice was also mailed to individuals who had already participated in the previous public comment meetings. The draft Environmental Assessment was also made available online at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain->

prairie/federalassistance/nepa/index.html. Seven comments were received on the draft EA during the public review period. Five were in support of the shooting range and two were not.

In response to the comments on noise:

The location of the shooting range is approximately 250 feet from the outlet of the dam where the water creates a constant noise. It is unlikely that shots will be heard two to three miles away at the existing "horse camping site" commonly used by campers. The 12-inch thick berms and baffles will also work to reduce the noise from the range. Hunting is already permitted in certain areas around the park and on some private land surrounding the park resulting in an occasional shot during the seasons. The proposed night training is for state officers and it would not occur frequently. The 12-inch thick berms and baffles will also work to reduce the noise on the range. If KDWPT receives complaints due to the night training they plan to address those issues immediately.

In response to the comment on increased traffic:

Since opening in 1994, an average of 700,000 people per year visit Hillsdale State Park with the record being 1.2 million people in one year. It is also one of the most fished reservoirs in the state. An increase in use due to the shooting range is expected to be minimal in comparison to the use the park already receives. The range is to be located off the main entry way over the dam, thus no new roads will be constructed.

In response to the comment on unsuitable soil structure in the county:

The Environmental Protection Agency's Best Management Practices for Lead at Outdoor Shooting Ranges states that if the soil is a clean silica sand and gravel, fractured granite, or similar type material, then the lead may move long distances in solution while denser soils, like clays, prevent the lead from moving quickly through the soils. The soils at the site are predominately clay (Appendices 7-9 list the specific types and characteristics). Clay soils increase surface runoff and the mitigation process used for lead clean-up in clayey conditions tends to be more involved. KDWPT is aware of the soil and related lead mitigation issues in the area and plans to channel water runoff into a detention pond where water samples will be taken regularly to monitor lead levels. The KDWPT mitigation plan for spent lead is in Section 4.1.1.

In response to the comment on the use of backstops:

The range is designed to face an 80 foot hill which will serve as a backstop. Also, berms will be built separately to act as an extra safety buffer to stop fired rounds.

Conclusion

Based on review of the final Environmental Assessment and evaluation of the effects of the proposed action, I have determined that the proposed action is not a major federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102 (2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. I also find that all reasonable alternatives were considered in the evaluation of this project and that this project complies with the intent of Executive Order 11988 "Floodplain Management" and Executive Order 11990 "Protection of Wetlands." Consequently, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 6

Date

Reference: Final Environmental Assessment for the Hillsdale Shooting Range, Paola Kansas, Miami County, July 2011.